

critical digest



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This Week in NYC

Gov Rockefeller signed the \$15 million NY State bill authorizing acquisition of the Lincoln Center Light Opera and Ballet Theatre. Even though the NY City Council did not pass the \$12 million bill authorizing acquisition of the site and construction of the 1100 seat theatre at 65th St and Amsterdam Av, construction is set to start in Nov. If the city legislature has not approved the measure by then other means will be found to finance it. The Theatre and Music Library-Museum planned for the top of the Repertory Theatre may be scrapped if the Council does not act.

Plays

Tenderloin closed after 217 performances, road tour opening on May 19 in Las Vegas... The Care-taker by Harold Pinter with English cast members Donald Pleasence, Alan Bates, Peter Woodthorpe due Oct 4 at Lyceum... The King From Ashtabula musical adaptation of the Vern Sneider novel with book by Gore Vidal, music by Cy Coleman, lyrics by Carolyn Leigh to be presented next season by Fryer-Carr... The Crime of Giovanni Venturi to be presented next Mar by Philip Rose with major backing by Columbia Records.

Broadway Business

Variety reported increases in most grosses with sell-outs at Camelot, Mary Mary, Carnival and Sound of Music, and six shows still on twofers.

Drama Desk

"Vernon Rice Drama Desk" Awards for "Outstanding Contribution to Off Broadway" will be presented at May 8 meeting of "Drama Desk." Elections of NY theatre editors & reporters group will also be held.

NYC Calendar

The Tattooed Countess - Barbizon Plaza (58 & 6th) 5/3. Dick Randall- Robert D Feldstein present new musical comedy with book, music and lyrics by Coleman Dowell, based on novel by Carl Van Vechten, directed by Robert K Adams with Irene Manning, Margaret Hamilton, John Stewart.

The Blacks - St Marks Playhouse (133-2nd Av) 5/4. Bernstein-Edgar-Eyre-Gregory present new play by Jean Genet, translated by Bernard Frechtman, directed by Gene Frankel with Louis Gossett, James Earl Jones, Roscoe Lee Browne, Ethel Ayler.

Players

Tammy Grimes raised to star billing in The Unsinkable Molly Brown... Frances Cuka replaced Joan Plowright, A Taste of Honey,... Sandor Szabo replaced George Voskovec, Big Fish, Little Fish. Jason Robards, Jr to take 8 weeks leave of absence starting May 6 to complete "Tender in the Night" film... Lucille Ball returned to Wildcat Mon after fainting midway during Sat eve performance, Sheilah Hackett completed the show. Edith King fractured her wrist in trying to catch Ball, and played the start of week with arm in sling.

John McCurry and Brooke Hayward joined Mandingo, now due May 19... Bette Davis and Patrick O'Neal to star in The Night of the Iguana new Tennessee Williams play due Dec 28... Ralph Bellamy re-elected to third term as Equity president... William Fields, 62, press agent for Playwrights Company from 1938-1960 died of cancer at Hospital for Special Surgery, NYC.

Special Events

New \$800,000 Actors Fund of America home at Englewood, NJ, to be officially opened May 5.

Off Broadway

The Painted Days closed after 28 performances... Hobo to continue... Living Theatre's twin bill of Women of Trachis and The Marrying Maiden dropped from repertory after 50 performances... Roots will close May 6. Producer Norman Twain blames Equity for not allowing either transfer to another Off Broadway house or a concession to cut salaries at 46th St Mayfair Theatre from \$85 to the regular \$45 Off Broadway rate.

A Curious Evening With Gypsy Rose Lee to open May 9 at either Mayfair or Maidman... Buck Henry joins The Premise, chosen from over 700 who tried out... Jordan Charney replaced Mark Richman, The Zoo Story... Twelve Angry Men first production of Brooklyn Theatre Arts Co May 16-20, 26, 27 at Academy of Music.

Theatre TV Notes

WNTA(NY) Play of the Week May 1 is All Summer Long with Betty Field, Henderson Forsythe... The Power and the Glory with Laurence Olivier to be taped May 7 by David Susskind for future TV network presentation.

Theatre Record Notes

Two original cast albums made this week--Carnival by MGM and The Happiest Girl in the World by Columbia.

Theatre Book Notes

"Masters of the Drama" anthology of 45 classics edited by Bennett Cerf, to be published by Random House... The Devil's Advocate published by Murrow.

Play Diary

Next Week: Becket-Hudson 5/8... A Curious Evening With Gypsy Rose Lee 5/9.

DIGESTS OF CURRENT NYC THEATRE REVIEWS

South Pacific- City Center 4/26-5/14. 7 pros-unanimous with 6 raves- filed on NY City Center Light Opera Co revival of 1949 Rodgers & Hammerstein hit, directed by John Fearnley with Allyn Ann McLerie, William Chapman, Rosetta Le Noire and Dort Clark. All cheered cast, direction, production with only News aisle-sitter not convinced that musical is not a classic of the American theatre. Funke, Times, enjoyed able company in one of the memorable experiences of our musical theatre, with each member of the cast apparently considering it an honor to be involved. Crist, Herald Tribune, agreed that everyone involved has done well in this honey of a revival, much better than the City Center's try six years ago. Coleman, Mirror, found show wore its years well with each and every number still terrific, not a filler in the lot, a real bargain at \$3.95 top. Watts, Post, was captured all over again by the magic in the beautifully sung revival, the finest of romantic American musical plays, with a well chosen cast. McClain, Journal American, joined bandwagon for wonderfully sung, almost facsimile production of the original, tastefully put together. Except for the fact that McLerie is too tall to be a pixie, everything else was perfect. Aston, World Telegram & Sun, liked revival abundant with talent. He and McClain advised parents to take youngsters to production. Sole milder view, still a pro, was from Chapman, News, who approved of acceptable company performing the old favorites in the blockbuster that holds up fairly well. But as a cockeyed pessimist he doesn't think show is going to be classed as a classic, as it struck him as disturbingly quaint in songs and story.

Evenings With Chekhov-Key (4 St Marks Pl) 4/20 5 pro- Times, Herald Tribune, Mirror, Post, World Telegram & Sun- and 1 con- Journal American- filed on Greg Reardon's production of three Chekhov one act plays--"The Anniversary", "On the Road", "The Wedding" directed by Amnon Kabatchnik with Sorrell Booke, Bruce Kimes, Roberta Royce. Affirmative majority praised direction and acting of the two comedies and one drama as outstanding, while single negative voter was neither moved nor impressed. Three of five pros were raves- Herald Tribune, Mirror, WTS. Morgenstern, Herald Tribune, praised full-grown actors, skillful, spirited and extremely well-directed with special praise for Booke and Kimes. Altschuler, Mirror, loved wildly witty turmoil of farce and drama, directed with invention and animation, giving players triple threat field day. Aston, WTS, doubts if better acting can be found in these parts, direction shows masters understanding of these 1890 Chekhov playlets. In slightly milder tone Taubman, Times, marked triple bill a joy, revealing Chekhov in contrasting moods. Times man thought "Anniversary" presented in too broad a style. Herridge, Post, recommended quite satisfying program of small showcases of acting and direction, though not as notable as director's A Country Scandal last season. Negative viewer O'Connor, Journal American, did not think these early Russian works reveal very much of Chekhov's brilliance. Best part of evening with three tedious acts was the nice long 15 minute intermissions. Reviewer believes director also has done better.

Young Abe Lincoln- O'Neill 4/25 matinee- 1 pro- Times- added to file of 4 pros of children's one hour musical presented originally during Easter week at York Theatre by Little Golden Books. Esterow, Times, found songs with lyrics by Joan Javitz and music by Victor Ziaken delightful, the cast headed by Darrell Sandeen and Judy Foster fine. Previously Herald Tribune, Post, World Telegram & Sun, Journal American, had applauded it.

Happy As Larry- Martinque (32nd & Broadway) 4/25 1 pro- World Telegram & Sun- and 5 con- Times, Herald Tribune, News, Post, Journal American- filed on revival of Donagh MacDonagh's 1950 play presented by Lucille Lortel and Irish Players, directed by Michael Clarke-Laurence with Helena Carroll, Dermot McNamara, Barbara Hayes, Brendan Burke. Sole affirmative was rave notice from Aston, WTS, who recommended roistering, rollicking high-fered production with lickety split direction. But dissenters couldn't find much fun, most blaming script written in verse. Calt, Times, feared it moves jaggardly and without inspiration, ponderous instead of whimsical. Kerr, Herald Tribune, felt neither cast nor director had any faith in breaking loose from torture chamber of rhymes. Davis, News, condemned it as a lighthearted tale that carried too much dead weight to be more than intermittently interesting. Watts, Post, summed his view of it as not very good with the Irish whimsy getting out of hand and turning into archness. McClain, Journal American, thought it had too many ingredients not properly mixed by author.

Week-end Twin Bill- One Sheridan Sq 4/24. 2 pro- Times, World Telegram & Sun- and 2 con- Herald Tribune, Mirror- filed on program of "Philoktetes" by George Maxim Ross, directed by Mark Schoenberg, and "The Women of the Tomb" by Michael de Ghelderode, translated by George Hauger, directed by Eugene Lion; presented by Harold Steinberg-Florence Rand. Two mild pros split on which playlet they liked best. Gelb, Times, okayed "Philoktetes" script as the work of articulate and promising playwright with the staging only reasonably successful; other play he termed too special. Aston, WTS, liked "Women of the Tomb" and recommended it to adults who can take a dirty word or two; other he termed interesting but heavy going. Negative voter Coleman, Mirror, tabbed entire bill tedious and unrewarding, also over-priced at \$4 top. Morgenstern, Herald Tribune, felt both plays make same error, by having exalted theatre themes expressed in common language.

Talent '61 Musical Revue- Shubert 4/25 Matinee. 2 pros- Herald Tribune, World Telegram & Sun- filed on the fourth annual showcase matinee presented by John Effrat, Broadway Show League, for agents and producers. Little, Herald Tribune, reported afternoon show consisted of 39 quick moving scenes all especially created for Talent '61 and most of them sharply angled to show business interests. Aston, WTS, lauded style of the kids, their energy and their professional slickness becoming more astonishing every year. WTS reviewer admitted he would not dream of picking any to name, for it would not be fair to the rest.

Judy Garland- Carnegie Hall 4/23 & 5/21. 4 pro- Times, Herald Tribune, Post, World Telegram & Sun- filed on single Sun eve solo performance by singer, which will be repeated May 21. Funke, Times, noted audience acted more like revival meeting than concert audience with at least a half dozen standing and screaming ovations during the evening. Looking trimmer and a good deal more youthful she was always in control of self, Times critic rated. Crist, Herald Tribune, also reported continuous cheering and concluded that she couldn't give her anything but raves. Johnson, Post, likened continuous shouts to the frenzied intensity of voodoo rites, with the program and the singer better than the recent Metropolitan Opera House program. Aston, WTS, thought she looked as big as homecoming day in the Big Ten.



GREEN
ROOM
DEPARTMENT



PROS & CONS BY TMK

PRODUCERS VS. CRITICS... League of NY Theatres special committee to see if the producers can't find a way to have the critics write more "commercial" reviews puzzles McClain, Journal American. He can't understand how they have the temerity to appoint such a group. This has gone beyond mere critical opinion, now the producers are telling the critics how the reviews should be written... Such battles help liven up these dullish days, adds Sobol, Journal American.

LINCOLN TEMPEST... News editorial backed Gov. Rockefeller's comment that politics balked NY City Council passing \$12 million bill for land for light opera and ballet theatre. Rockefeller noted that Tammany Hall is an "institution not noted for its devotion to culture." Editorial hopes this painful situation gets straightened out soon.

AWARD VIEWS... Most distressing feat of critical idiocy of NY Drama Critics Circle Awards was the giving of the foreign play citation to the slice-of-life piece of muck A Taste of Honey, panned Chapman, News, Critic awarded "Sorehead" title on "Tony" Awards to Kermit Bloomgarden... Watts, Post, noted that as a member of the "Tony" nominating committee even producers are capable of envious rages... The reason David Merrick did not jump up to accept the "Tony" Award for Becket, reasons Crosby, Herald Tribune, is that the producer who put on so many shows this year, forgot it was his.

COLUMN TIPS... Twofers to be banned at Shubert theatres next year, hears Winchell, Mirror... Judy Holliday was fully employed by the columnists. She will be in the film version of Critic's Choice, notes Kilgallen, Journal American. While Wilson, Post, adds she will be back on Broadway next season in the musical version of Time of the Cuckoo.

FIELDS OBITS... Broadway lost one of its finest citizens with the passing of publicist Wm Fields, states Winchell, Mirror.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... Gramercy Arts Theatre, where Gallows Humor is current, picked as the most uncomfortable playhouse in town by Davis, News. The landlord would do ticket buyers and himself a favor by removing every other row... Lovely expressive teeth of Elizabeth Seal, Carol Channing, Dran Seitz cheered by Aston, World Telegram & Sun... Donald Madden, Hamlet, who continued emoting despite a painful onstage accident at the Phoenix, elected by Slocum, Mirror, as a gentleman and an artist in the true sense of the word.

SECOND GUESSES... Carnival is a joy, applauds Watts, Post, who believes one of the happy fruits of its outstanding success is that it appears to have driven out of existence the unnecessary exclamation point with which its title was originally burdened... If the new musical has a lack somewhere in the entertainment, that keeps it from becoming wholly festive it stems from a quite noticeable disparity between the style of the staging and the stylesness of the libretto, explains Kerr, Herald Tribune. The staging is everywhere and most emphatically lyric. The language when the people stop moving so fluidly and begin to speak is not.

Evenings With Chekhov is an entertaining evening composed of two parts wild farce and one part sober drama. Director Amnon Kabatchnik, set designer Fred Sammut and the versatile cast headed by Sorrell Booke displayed ingenuity, imagination and taste in fitting the three brilliant one act plays on to the tiny playing area available. For all concerned it is both a splendid, painless showcase of their respective talents, and a very satisfying evening of expert Off Broadway fare.

Happy As Larry is a meagre Irish fantasy told in stilted rhyme by a company of players who do their best to bring life and fun to what basically remains a poem to be read and not a play to be presented. Production destroys forever the idea that six narrators are better than one. Though the director had many interesting ideas the script might have been better suited to a small, band box theatre instead of an arena type stage.

The Decameron is a clean, disappointing musical version of the famed tales that should help to get the work unbanned in every library in the land. While the very talented, handsome players sing the pretty tunes with their often sprightly lyrics, the show is very pleasant. But the songs in the very short Off Broadway evening are spaced too far apart, leaving too much time for dull-washed up adaptations of "Tales." Lily white is the color of the costumes and the same shade is used in the dialogue.

Talent '61 Musical Revue was a slick, professional showcase introducing a large group of shining newcomers to a matinee audience of agents and producers. Individual song material went over the best with the personality of both the performer and the material writer readily apparent. Outstanding stylists among the 64 presented were--Betty Rhodes, Buzzi, Joan Rivers, Bill Perry, George Lindsay, Larry Hankin, Mona Abboud, Phyllis Ann Bash.

Off Broadway theatre is not only expensive it is very short. Presentations during the past two weeks were almost all under the two hour mark. Though announced to start at 8 40 PM, most got under way at 8 50 or 9 PM. With extra long intermissions, most of the new productions were completed by 10 40 PM. Except for one-man shows, Broadway producers would not even consider presenting plays and musicals of such length. In many Broadway musicals the trick is to get in as much material as time will allow, not to cut it to the bare minimum. The way it stands now, it often takes longer to find the Off Broadway theatre, than to attend it.

The Lincoln Center Theatres will be built in spite of NY politics, thanks to Gov. Rockefeller's signing of the \$15 million bill purchasing the Light Opera and Ballet Theatre. Even though the City Council continues to hold up the passage of the \$12 million bill okaying its construction, other means will be found to pay for the playhouse which will be part of the NY State and City World's Fair exhibits in 1964. It is probably just as well that Tammany Hall will not have a voice in what productions may be presented in any city built theatre.



OUTER
BROADWAY
THEATRE
LETTER

College Theatre

Two musicals on schedule of Catholic Univ, Washington, D. C. From the Desk of Father Hartke revue to be presented Apr 28-May 15 and Oh! Wyoming! with book, lyrics and music by novelist Mary O'Hara to be presented May 31 - Jun 4 prior to Cheyenne, Wyo. production Jul 24-29.

The Duel by Chekhov, adapted by David Gild presented Apr 3-6 at Yale Univ, School of Drama... Alan Schneider guest director of The Bald Soprano and Pullman Car Hiawatha May 12-14 at Hofstra College, Hempstead, NY, Contemporary Arts Festival... The Moon Beseiged drama by Seyril Schochen to be presented on Broadway next season by Lorin E Price, it debuted last year at Stanford Univ... Princeton, NJ, Univ to continue for second year professional performance program at McCarter Theatre... Northwestern Univ, Evanston, Ill Drama Festival to present The Prodigal, The Inspector General, The School for Husbands and Noah in repertory Jun 26-Aug 5.

Lillian Hellman's playwriting course for 11 undergraduate students at Harvard Univ detailed by Ross, Herald Tribune. Students were picked from 62 who applied. They are assigned novels, short stories, plays to read, and then are asked to write short stories, essays, poems or plays based on theme of the assigned work.

AETA- ANTA

Midwest Theatre Conference Aug 4-5 to be held at Univ of Chicago with Harold Clurman and Clifford Odets speakers. Court Theatre will present Six Characters in Search of an Author and Henry IV Part I.

"Open Stage Theatre Check List" booklet issued by Greater NY Chapter of ANTA Board of Standards and Planning for the Living Theatre.

Summer Playhouses

Boston Arts Theatre summer program to be presented by National Phoenix Theatre, Michael Dewell producer starting Jul 5 with The Turn of the Screw new opera version by Benjamin Britten with Patricia Neway... The Affairs of Anatole musical by Tom Jones and Elizabeth the Queen with Eva Le Gallienne will also be produced.

Westbury, NY, Music Fair opens Jun 6... Playhouse in the Park, Cincinnati, opens second season Apr 26 with Volpone... Strawhat Players will present season of stock at Empress Hotel, Peterborough, Ontario.

Between Seasons a new play by Malcolm Wells¹ to be presented on summer circuit by Dan Blum, starring Gloria Swanson, directed by Bill Penn, prior to possible Broadway try in fall... Catherine the Great with Mae West to return to strawhat route... Conflict a new musical set in Civil War period to debut Jul 4 at Starlight Theatre, Pawling, NY. Book and lyrics by Chaunce Skilling, music by Robert Skilling.

Ford Fund

Alan P Pryce-Jones, former London book and drama critic, named program associate of Ford Foundation, Humanities and Arts Program.

Road Tours

Cleveland Playhouse Touring Repertory Co was viewed at two Florida stops by Taubman, Times. Doctor Faustus presented at Univ of Florida, Gainesville, had ingenious staging by David Hager with a young, devoted, hardy cast of troupers headed by Richard Halverson in the title role. At Palatka, Fla, in a half filled high school auditorium, Candida was presented the following night. First acted started in a deep freeze, while play build during second and third acts with Adale O'Brian, Richard Oberlin, and Halverson in leading roles.

Community Theatre

The Commentator by Hollywood press agent Ben Irwin, which won Town Theatre, Columbia, S. C., playwriting contest this year, to be presented there May 25.

London

NYC auditions of 42 students applying for six openings at two year Royal Academy of London held at American Theatre Wing. One will win one year Armanda Steele scholarship.

National Theatre of Wales to be established at St David's Theatre, Cardiff, opening 1964 with program starring Laurence Olivier and Richard Burton... Royal Court producer George Devine considering establishment of first provincial playhouse tie-up at Norwich... Tom Courtenay replaced Albert Finney, Billy Liar, who left to join Luther.

Paris

Theatre business dropped due to Algerian crisis and two of the 50 theatres closed early for season.

US Repertory

Theatre Guild- American Repertory Co after completion of European tour in Paris Jun 17 will then tour Latin America.

Europe

Living Theatre fund raising program to attend European festivals has needed \$19,000 of required \$40,000. Next event is May 2 "Gala Champagne Party-Art Auction" at studio of Larry Rivers, \$25 per couple.

Show Tours

Play of the Month Club, NYC to make London, Paris, Dublin theatre tours of 17 days for \$874 leaving NYC May 26, Aug 4, Aug 11.

Tryout Calendar

Donnybrook!- National, Washington, D. C. 5/2.



"CD" digests all theatre material in the 2100 pages of 7 NY daily papers of the preceding week. "CD" subscribers are invited to inquire further for more specific data on current reviews, back reviews and out-of-town tryout reviews via mail, phone or drop by for coffee and facts when in NYC.

